

February 20, 2001

### **FISH ACTION #3**

## **LOWER AMERICAN RIVER February 1 through February 28, 2001**

### **Description of Action**

An upstream fish action is occurring on the lower American River (LAR) as a result of the dry hydrologic conditions that have occurred upstream from Folsom Reservoir since December 2000. Fall-run chinook salmon and steelhead spawned in the LAR last fall in flows ranging from 2,500 cubic-feet per second (cfs) to 3,000 cfs. Because the inflow into Folsom Reservoir has decreased, releases at Nimbus have declined to 1,500cfs. This reduction in flow has already adversely affected incubating steelhead and fall-run chinook salmon redds. The Management Agencies, in conjunction with the American River Operations Group have recommended that flows be maintained at 1,500 cfs through February 2001 to avoid further exacerbation of the impact. Reclamation would, under pre-CVPIA Section 3406(b)(2) "hereinafter referred to as (b)(2)" baseline projections, reduce LAR flows from 1,500 cfs to 1,100 cfs. Reclamation and the Management Agencies have agreed to maintain the recommended flow and seek means to modify future LAR flows where possible to recover the water used and utilize either (b)(2) water<sup>1</sup> or Environmental Water Account (EWA) supplies for any water that can not be recovered through minor changes to project operations. The American River Operations Group is working on providing additional information and assessing the magnitude of the impacts. In late February, the Management Agencies may recommend maintaining 1,500 cfs beyond March 1, 2001. If this is decided and it is determined that EWA assets may be required as collateral, it will be considered a new fish action.

### **Estimated Cost of the Action**

Reclamation has estimated that the action would lower the storage in Folsom Reservoir by approximately 22,000 acre-feet (AF). This estimate is based on an increased release to the American River from 1,100 to 1,500 cfs from February 1 through February 28.

### **Method of Accounting for the Cost**

Reclamation and DWR will provide the Management Agencies an accounting of the actual

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<sup>1</sup>Whether there is (b)(2) water to use for this purpose will depend on hydrology in the next few months. The current 90% exceedence forecast indicates that the Shasta Index could fall below 3.2 million acre-feet. (b)(2) water may be available for this fish action if the Shasta index increases above 3.2 million acre-feet. However, if the Shasta index remains at or below 3.2 million acre-feet, the quantity of (b)(2) water available could be reduced from 800,000 acre-feet to 600,000 acre-feet. To date, (b)(2) expenditures plus future obligations to the Delta under Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan may have fully committed the 600,000 acre-feet.

water, energy, storage and conveyance costs. An initial water cost analysis will be provided within approximately thirty days of completing the action and will include a comparison between the actual operation (with the fish action) and a base operation (based on planned releases and exports). Final water cost accounting for the action will be calculated by October 31, 2001. If it is determined that EWA water is required for this fish action, Reclamation and DWR will provide the Management Agencies and estimate of all other costs within thirty days upon completion of the recovery action(s). The Management Agencies will be given adequate time to review the water cost analysis. Disagreements regarding the analysis are to be discussed within the (b)(2)/EWA Interagency Team. Any unresolved disputes will be elevated to the Water Operations Management Team (WOMT) for final resolution.

#### **EWA/(b)(2) Asset Availability**

The Management Agencies recognize this could ultimately become a (b)(2), a re-operation, or an EWA action depending on future hydrology. Some discussion of how these various assets may be used occurred at both the WOMT meeting on February 6 and the EWA meeting on February 7. Six scenarios were identified as potential recovery actions. These six scenarios represent the flexibility available to the Management Agencies in providing recovery for the LAR Fishery Action. Additional scenarios may be identified and all scenarios would require further evaluation before selection as the preferred recovery action. The six scenarios identified by the WOMT and the EWA Team are as follows:

- 1) CVPIA (b)(2). The impact to the Central Valley Project (CVP) could be accounted for as (b)(2) water if the entire 800,000 AF becomes available. This could result in a state gain calculation and accrual of water for the EWA.
- 2) CVPIA (b)(1) Re-operation. The February impact to the CVP could be accounted for as a (b)(1) action by reducing releases from Folsom in June, or another month, by the estimated cost of the action (approximately 22,000AF).
- 3) Straight Water Swap. The 22,000 AF impact in Folsom Reservoir would be paid back with a swap for approximately 19,000 AF (22,000 AF minus carriage losses of approximately 3,000AF) of EWA water in San Luis Reservoir. Although the CVP would be made whole, unless Folsom Reservoir spills or fills, or American River releases are reduced in June, July, or August, storage would be approximately 22,000 AF lower as a result of the fish action.
- 4) The EWA would assume the debt in Folsom Reservoir and recover a portion of the incremental releases in the Delta. EWA would need to make Folsom Reservoir whole or reduce American River releases in June, July, or August of 2001 and compensate CVP for lost exports.
- 5) The EWA would carry the 22,000 AF debt across the water year and would require adequate collateral, or payback by June, July, or August of 2002 for temperature control.
- 6) North of Delta EWA water purchases would be used to maintain releases for exports in June, July, or August allowing the CVP to reduce American River releases and regain the 22,000 AF lost storage in Folsom Reservoir.

It was mutually agreed on by both groups that it would take some time before the appropriate recovery action could be identified. Influencing factors include the Shasta Criteria and (b)(2)/EWA forecasts. EWA will incur no cost if (b)(2) water is available.

In order to proceed with the fishery action, the Management Agencies concluded that there are enough EWA assets available to the CVP to cover this fish action. Currently, the EWA has 72,000 AF of water available in San Luis Reservoir and an agreement with the Yuba County Water Agency for the purchase of 50,000 AF is imminent.



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Date 2-22-01



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Date 2/22/01

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